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ABSTRACT

A total of 47 twelfth grade students from five different English classes and the six teachers in the English department at a secondary school in Canada took part in a study to determine what effects traditional grade-based writing evaluation procedures had upon the process of writing. There were three distinct yet related components to the investigation: an evaluation questionnaire, an attitude survey, and group interviews. The evaluation questionnaire allowed respondents the opportunity to grade and comment upon a series of four essays written by former grade 12 students. The attitude survey, administered to the same student and teacher groups during the week following the evaluation questionnaire, consisted of a series of attitude statements that were rated on a Likert scale. Interviews were conducted with six students selected on the basis of their writing ability and their willingness to vocalize some of their thoughts on writing and its evaluation. The wide range of data seemed to indicate that, for many students, the evaluation procedures had a strong influence upon the way they conceived of the process of writing. Although students did participate in prewriting, writing, and certain postwriting activities, when their sights were aimed at one particular target--the teacher--the writing process became distorted. (HOD)

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TRADITIONAL GRADE-BASED WRITING EVALUATION AND THE PROCESS APPROACH: SYSTEMS IN CONFLICT

by

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

As an activity in the instructional and evaluational functioning of everyday school life, writing plays a dominant role. Teachers in many subjects consider writing in one form or another to be an integral part of the daily instruction they provide and an even larger part of the means of evaluation they use to assess student performance in their courses. It is not uncommon to find for example that the "essay" or "report" so common to English classes is also a well-known and frequently used method of having students demonstrate understanding in such other secondary school subjects as History, Geography, Biology, Physics, Guidance, Family Studies, Foods and Nutrition, Physical Education, Art and Chemistry. Because it encourages students to "synthesize" their learning into a coherent whole, writing has become an important tool of educational assessment. Emig (1973) reported that approximately eighty percent of all writing done in schools was of the type designed to test the students' knowledge for the teacher. Truly, at the secondary level, a student's ability to express himself in the written mode to no small measure determines the level of success he will encounter during his school career.

Yet, considering this relative importance of writing as a skill, it is surprising that educators know really very little about how people learn to write. It is true, we have abundant information on how to organize, categorize and assess the products that students generate. For we know a great deal about written language and its structure. We even have copious

amounts of pedagogical research on the nature of the various assignments that have proven most effective. Yet still, that very private, internal process that seems to characterize all composing remains a mystery, hidden within each individual. Researchers like Donald Graves heavily stress the individual nature of the process.

> At any given point in a writing episode, many variables most of them unknown at the time of composing, contribute to the writing process.... Children write for unique reasons, employ highly individual coping strategies and view writing in ways peculiar to their own person. In short, the writing process is as variable as the individual's personality. (1975, p. 237)

Stallard, in a study of the writing behaviour of good student writers comes to similar conclusions:

> Essentially the complex question of what happens when good writers attack a writing task remains unanswered.... The dearth of research in the area may be due to the difficulty of observing and analyzing cognitive activity of any kind. (1974, p. 206)

It truly seems that, as happens in many relatively new areas of investigation, the more researchers probe into the writing process, the less clear and less quantifiable it becomes.

Of course, educators naturally tend to become somewhat uncomfortable in the face of too much uncertainty, especially when it pertains to what is to be taught. English teachers, who by and large, have been charged with the responsibility of instructing writing have been inclined over the years to adopt "coping strategies" of their own. For some, the path toward good writing is one of gradual error reduction. Grammatical correctness becomes the desirable end of a course in writing.

For others it involves the increase in the length and syntactical complexity of thought units over time. And for still others, writing is relegated to the realm of the mystical to be viewed with the awe and respect due all creative endeavour. Barnes (1976) pinpoints what he considers to be the teacher's dilemma -- his confict between his "responsibility for control and his responsibility for learning: the one treats pupils as receivers and the other treats them as makers." (p. 176)

Methodologies for teaching writing, to be of any practical use whatsoever in many teachers' eyes, must be structured. They see writing as a step-by-step series of skills and concepts set up in a hierarchy to be mastered by the student one-by-one. The establishment of a good, strong knowledge base in grammar, syntax, usage and spelling is vital within this conception. Thus the teacher, as the holder of this knowledge, becomes also the controller of the learning that takes place and classroom management is more easily facilitated. The important task of the writing instructor is to isolate those tangible and teachable aspects of the writing process and ensure that the student knows, if nothing else, at least the technical aspects of language. Still widespread in its use, this particular notion dates back to the very early days of education when the idea of training the mind was in vogue. Many parents would have all schools go "back-to-the-basics" in the belief that learning to write would be more effective if it were more controlled.

On the other hand, the much more modern "process" approach deems writing to be much more than the cumulative acquisition of a series of skills. Teachers leaning toward this conception see writing as an act of thinking or coming-to-know what one is thinking, a nebulous, inner process that virtually defies analysis into component elements, a process indeed much more akin to and cognizant of what researchers are discovering about composing. Unable really to control the nature of the process, the teacher here adopts the role of helper and guide in the student's own process of discovering and revealing his thoughts and his inner voice. In many ways the instructor's most important task is to stand back and not interfere in what is seen to be a natural human propensity for expression. Thus, with the focus upon the actual "doing" of the writing, the classroom atmosphere becomes much less controlled, more individualized. Progress cannot so easily be seen by parents because it is not so easily measured.

The current thrust in English education is decidedly toward the process approach. Specialist organizations have launched full scale campaigns to convert teachers to the "new" ways of thinking about composition. Workshops, conferences, new materials, curriculum guides all endeavour to teach teachers what process in writing is all about. Many teachers do perceive its potential for they feel, as Barnes said, a responsibility for learning. And many too sense its faddishness for they feel a responsibility for control. After

all, as Sommers (1978) points out,

> ...the word process exists in such a terminological thicket and has become so much jargon, so maligned and misunderstood, that the more the term is used, the less we seem to understand what is meant by the idea that composing is a process. (p. 209)

By far the majority of teachers are caught somewhere between the two extremes of Barnes' dilemma. Certainly "control" must be part of the schooling system. For in the final analysis, teachers are responsible for the kind and quantity of achievement that goes on in the classroon. They must assess student progress according to the evaluation procedures and standards in use at the school and generally conform to the methodologies in most common use among their colleagues. Yet, the encouragement of real learning is also a part of the teacher's job. The process approach offers an opportunity to make writing much more than just a "fulfil-the-assignment" task for students; indeed it seems to open the door to relevant learning even though its individualism pulls control away from the teacher.

Undeniably, in this perhaps most important skill area in school there exists overwhelming uncertainty among teachers. And thus, not surprisingly, in this climate of confusion, the field of writing evaluation has become a somewhat unstable one for the students who must pass through the school system. In the course of a single day, they may encounter several different teachers, each of whom harbours his own particular conception of good writing. There is remarkably little agreement.

> Definitions of proficiency in writing vary widely from school to school and from teacher to teacher, with the widest agreement at the lower rungs of the skills ladder, where correctness and basic readability are the concern, and the widest divergencies at the upper rungs where the stylistic preferences of teachers come into play. But even within the province of error, there are disagreements about the importance of different errors and the number of errors an educated reader will tolerate without dismissing the writer as incompetent. (Shaughnessy, 1977, p. 276)

Some teachers may look for spelling errors, some for grammar and usage accuracy, while others may look for vitality of expression and originality of thought. And the student, a seemingly ever-indulgent recipient of the assessments that teachers purvey, must accustom himself to these varying conceptions of quality and accept them as mere incontrovertible facts of school life. Seldom does he get the opportunity, in spite of the tremendous power and permanence of grades in the school system, to think about the evaluation procedures that are used on his writing and consider their effect upon his learning. Evaluation, for him, is essentially a one-way process -- from the teacher to the student.

In writing, more so than in any other kind of activity, the student reveals a part of himself. Geuder (1972) states that "nowhere else does an individual stand so naked as in his writing. Nowhere else is he so vulnerable." (p. 35) Shaughnessy (1977) too emphasizes this important consideration in Errors and Expectations.

> ...academic writing is a trap, not a way of saying something to someone. The spoken language, looping back and forth between speakers, offering chances for groping and backing up and even hiding, leaving

> room for language of hands and faces, of pitch and pauses, is generous and inviting. Next to this rich orchestration, writing is but a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all that the writer doesn't know, then passing into the hands of a stranger who reads it with a lawyer's eyes, searching for flaws....
>
> So absolute is the importance of error in the minds of many writers that 'good writing' to them means correct writing, nothing more. (p. 7)

If indeed, as modern composition research would indicate, writing is such an intimate process of personal discovery that can expose the individual's innermost thoughts, then one might well ask how closely students actually do approach real writing in a school situation. Perhaps in fact they spend most of their time assimilating the conception of good writing that their particular teacher-of-the-moment happens to have. And, if teachers' criteria seem to vary substantially, it is logical to assume that student perceptions of the writing process and the evaluation process will vary substantially too.

> If we believe in the hidden curriculum, that unconscious communication of values to students, then surely we must recognize that our values and priorities are communicated by the criteria we grade upon and thus believe important.... Students know on what basis we are grading, what expectations we truly hold for them, and act accordingly, Teachers teach what they truly grade. (Lewis, 1975, p. 82)

The purpose of this study was to determine what effects traditional grade-based writing evaluation procedures had upon the process of writing for students at the senior secondary level. Preliminary to this aim was an analysis of teacher and student perceptions of the writing evaluation process -- its

purpose, effectiveness and impact. The information thus obtained is important insofar as it may shed some light on the extent to which the evaluation procedures used in some schools may control or pre-determine the most significant elements of learning how to write effectively for students. Furthermore, it may indicate some of the directions that educators may want to move in the field of writing evaluation especially when employing the process approach as the primary pedagogical strategy for writing instruction.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

A total of forty-seven grade 12 students from five different English classes and the six teachers in the English Department at Dunsmuir Secondary School, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, took part in the study. There were three distinct yet related components to the investigation:

1. An evaluation questionnaire
2. An attitude survey
3. Group interviews

The evaluation questionnaire allowed respondents (both students and teachers) the opportunity to grade and comment upon a series of four essays written by former grade 12 students. Each essay was rated on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) and respondents were asked to include, as part of their evaluation, a brief explanation of why they assessed the paper as they did and what advice they might offer to the writer for his next essay. At the end of the questionnaire respondents were asked to answer eight general questions on their feelings about evaluation and its role in learning how to write:

1. What kinds of things were you looking for as you read these essays for marking?

2. When do you think an essay should be termed "unacceptable" or a "failure"?

3. How much should effort be considered in assessing writing?

4. Did you find the scoring (from 1 to 5) easy or difficult? Please explain.

5. In your opinion, what is the purpose of grading students's work?

6. Can you sum up briefly what, for you, good writing is?

7. To what extent do you think your rating and your advice to the writers would help them improve in their future writing?

8. Do you have any general comments?

The questionnaires were administered to students from three different English classes (three different teachers) in early October, 1982. Because of the early time period in the school year and the assumption that there might exist some correlation between student and teacher responses as a carry-over from the previous year, students were asked to include the name of their last year's English teacher on their papers. Further to this end, each class group was kept in separate files according to the current year's teacher. Thus the possibility of multiple relationships between teacher and student responses was kept open.

Teachers' questionnaires were administered during the same time period. Teachers' names were included on the questionnaires as they were handed out.

The attitude survey, administered to the same student and teacher groups during the week following the evaluation questionnaire consisted of a series of attitude statements that were rated on a Likert scale: 1 - strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - uncertain, 4 - agree, 5 - strongly agree. The statements were assembled in random order to deal broadly with four main concerns:

1. The importance of grades in writing.
2. What teachers look for in awarding grades on writing assignments.
3. How grades influence thought processes.
4. The reliability of writing evaluation.

While the teacher and student surveys were different, each reflecting presumed opinions of the particular respondent group, the statements were essentially parallel under these four categories. Once again students were asked to include the name of their last year's English teacher and the surveys were kept in separate files to facilitate subsequent comparison.

The six students selected for the interviews (Niki, Gary, Blair, Geoff, Arlene and Korina) were selected on the basis of their ability (as assessed by their English teachers) and their willingness to vocalize some of their thoughts on writing and its evaluation. Ranging in ability in writing from high through average to quite low, they had in common a relatively strong desire to succeed in English and a statisfactory-to-good past record of work habits and effort. It was deemed important to select students who felt some commitment to learning even though they may often have

encountered problems with English and with writing. Three of the students participated in the questionnaire groups and three did not fill in the questionnaires at all.

Each interview, #1 with Niki, Korina and Geoff and #2 with Blair, Arlene and Gary, was generally free-flowing in nature, sometimes approaching the atmosphere of a discussion rather than an interview. But the open expression of ideas was considered to be a desirable outcome. Each session was guided roughly by the following questions:

1. If you were sitting at home or in school with an assignment to do and a blank page in front of you what kinds of things would be going through your mind?
2. What do you think is the purpose of teachers' making you do writing assignments?
3. Do you do any writing on your own?
4. What do you think about when you first receive an assignment?
5. How often do you get really "involved" in a writing assignment?
6. Do you think it's possible to do an assignment without really being "involved" in it?
7. After you've finished writing an assignment, do you usually have an idea of what grade you would expect to receive?
8. What would be your reaction if a paper was not graded?

The data from each of the three investigation components were analyzed under three broad categories: Scoring, Criteria and Attitudes. Student and teacher responses were analyzed for significant patterns which could be compared to show particular relationships.

The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed so that relevant attitude patterns could be matched with and

compared to opinions expressed in the questionnaire and the survey.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Scoring

The student scores for the essays appeared, when averaged, to show some similarities between classes in the rank ordering of the essays, essay #3 being the top, then essay #4, #1 and essay #2 the bottom in all three classes. However individual scores revealed that respondents were not really consistent in scoring patterns, three out of the four essays receiving every possible score from 1 to 5. In fact, over the three classes it seemed that only essay #3 maintained any real consistency in its received scores, achieving all ratings of 4 or 5. Perhaps, being the longest of the four, this essay was regarded by most respondents as automatically the best.

The teachers' scores showed much greater consistency, the maximum variance being only two scale points and most often only one. Interesting to note were the comparisons between student scores and those of their last year's English teacher. (See Table 1 and 2) Teacher S1 ranked essay #4 ahead of essay #1 while teacher S3 ranked them in the opposite order. Curiously, the average scores of the student respondents who had either S1 or S3 last year indicated the same opposite rank ordering.

TABLE 1
Evaluation Questionnaire - Scoring Results
Staff

	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #3	Essay #4
S1	2	2	4	3
S2	2	2	4.5	2.5
S3	3	1	5	2
S4	3	2	5	3
S5	3	2	4	-
S6	1.5	2	4.5	1
Average	2.42	1.8	4.5	2.3

TABLE 2
Evaluation Questionnaire - Scoring Results
Average Scores

	Essay #1	Essay #2	Essay #3	Essay #4
Students:				
Last yr. S1	2.69	2.36	4.69	3.53
Last yr. S3	3.2	2.7	4.34	2.82
Overall Av.	2.99	2.56	4.6	3.12
Staff				
S1	2	2	4	3
S3	3	1	5	2
Overall Av.	2.42	1.8	4.5	2.3

In other words, most students seemed somehow to see these two essays in much the same way that their last year's teacher had seen them. Perhaps there were factors within each of the essays that affected each group similarly and caused them to score in like fashion although similar relationships between the three classes and their respective current teachers were not in such ready evidence.

Criteria

Given that there were some perceiveable relationships

between teacher and student scores, it would be logical to assume that the criteria used by certain teachers and those used by the students they have taught would be similar. However, the results of the study indicated that such was not the case. Within the answers to questions on why the respondent scored the paper as he did and what advice he would give to the writer, were contained various indications of the types of criteria that were used in responding to the evaluation questionnaire. These fell roughly into eight broad categories: technical errors, content, clarity, style, organization, effort, full development and sentence quality. There was a wide spread. Patterns were not clearly distinguishable even among the "last year's" students of S1 and S3, who incidentally seemed to agree on their central evaluative foci -- technical errors, organization and full development of topic -- even though their definitions of good writing were quite disparate. It seemed by and large that student respondents were coming at this nebulous task of evaluation from a whole series of different judgmental bases. Most of the eight categories were mentioned by significant numbers of the total forty-four respondents.

TABLE 3 - Frequency of Criteria Mentioned

Technical errors	- 22
Content	- 17
Clarity	- 13
Style	- 23
Organization	- 10
Effort	- 14
Full development	- 11
Sentence quality	- 7

Yet it is significant too that no one category seemed to be

mentioned by more than approximately 50% of the total student population.

The teachers appeared more united in the criteria they held to be important. The four categories of technical error, organizacion, fuli development and sentence quality were listed by at least 83% of the teacher population.

It is interesting to note that three of these four teacher's criteria were the ones mentioned least by students. In addition the one criterion not mentioned at all by teachers seemed to be a relatively important mitigating factor for students: effort. Many students felt a need to be somewhat sympathetic toward the writing that had been done rather than strictly objective. For some, if a writer had tried, then he should pass. Curiously, only four of the fourteen who mentioned effort as a criterion actually passed all four of the essays with a score of 3 or better.

Generally it appeared that student respondents were employing vastly different methods to judge written material while teachers seemed to be more unified. This may have been the result simply of the students' lack of experience in the role of evaluator or it may have indicated a basic disparity in what students and teachers perceived to be good writing. Whatever the case, it seemed highly evident that student respondents were fundamentally unclear as to what they were looking for in the assessment of writing. One might speculate

that, even in their own writing, this lack of clarity about quality, could cause some confusion. In the final analysis, one wonders whether or not the question "What is good writing?" is truly an answerable one for students in any other than a very personal, individual sense.

Attitudes

Under the broad heading of attitudes, the questionnaires, surveys and interviews generated a wealth of data, herein analyzed and selected for significant patterns and particularly relevant comments.

a) Responses to the Evaluation Questionnaire

In the answers to the general questions on the evaluation questionnaire, response was noteable in two areas. First of all, most students seemed quite pragmatic about the purpose of grades in the learning process. Generally there was an air of compliance sometimes tinged with a certain sense of frustration. Grades in writing let "you know where you stand and how good you are," or "what level you're working at." Yet they also "let the student know how much better he must do to be accepted;" they "judge their talent, effort and knowledge for the teacher's assessment." To be sure, this judgmental aspect of grading writing seemed to bother many students. However teachers tended to be rather realistic about the purpose of grades feeling by and large that achievement could not really be furthered in any practical sense without the aid of grades. After all, they "establish a base from which point

development can occur."

Second, when it came to when an essay should be termed a "failure," interestingly enough the actual score that an essay had been given did not necessarily correlate with whether or not that essay should receive a failure. For according to the majority of student respondents, the evaluator should consider a further, extenuating factor: again that of effort. A total of 27 of the 44 respondents indicated in some way that effort should be a fairly major consideration. If the paper showed signs that the writer was at least trying then a pass should be awarded. One might speculate of course that comments like these would naturally be more characteristic of the habitual receivers of grades than of the experienced givers of grades, a kind of "plea from the oppressed" so to speak; yet they are indicative of the ways in which some students at least perceive grades on written assignments as a personal judgment on their character, their drive and their worth.

For teachers effort was relegated to a rather problematic and thus minor role. They felt not so able as students had thought to "see" effort in the finished work.

Overall in this general comment section students and teachers seemed to grant a certain inevitability to this process of writing evaluation. Judging and being judged was a necessary but not always fair or effective method of learning

how to write. Perhaps one student summed up the feeling best when he said, "grades are OK but I wish they would find a better way."

b) The Attitude Survey

The response patterns on the attitude survey seemed to indicate that the "grade" in a writing assignment was the decided favourite for both teachers and students as the prime source of student interest in writing. In fact, so important was the grade deemed to be that significant majorities (68% of students and 67% of teachers) felt it to be a necessary ingredient if students were to be motivated at all to do their best work. 70% of the students surveyed felt that the teacher was the most important audience for what they write.

The reason behind this relative accent on grades seemed to be their efficiency in showing clearly where students stand in relation to course standards. Both groups saw the process of grading papers as helping students and teachers to work together to improve writing even though teachers felt that grades were not the best source of feedback for students; they would rather use comments, employing the grade simply as a motivator or stimulus.

Curiously however 72% of the students surveyed felt that grades given by teachers were not very reliable. They perceived a wide variance in marking standards between teachers. Thus they tended to write what they thought each

individual teacher wanted to see and place little stock in the grade as a particularly valid or objective indication of actual writing quality.

c) The Interviews

The lengthy transcriptions generated by each interview are summarized within this section.

The opening question for each of the interviews invited comments about the kinds of factors that each subject considered as he or she began to write an assignment. These ranged from considerations of topic and content to required length; yet most comments seemed to focus on the assignment stipulations laid down by the teacher.

> Gary - I write what the teacher mostly wants, what would please the teacher.
> Niki - Some topics I write what I feel about it. Others I write what I think the teacher wants me to.

It seemed that the teacher's expectations formed a major part of the thinking behind an assignment for at least five of the six interviewees. Students like Arlene who felt enough self-assurance to do it their way could afford to "push" the teacher a little and insist on their rights.

> Arlene - I write it to my way and then if the teacher says something I'd go back up there and confront the teacher with it and ask for a reason why they didn't agree with my point of view.

But for the majority of students like Gary of Niki whose reticence prevented them from challenging the teacher's authority, the basic plan in writing was to fulfil the

teacher's expectations.

When the topic of discussion turned to grades and their educational "value," comments clearly reflected again the motivational impetus created by the grading process.

Geoff - The mark kind of hurts you in some ways but in other ways it helps because it makes you do the essay.
Gary - It there's no mark I really can't get into doing it because to me why do something that's not worth anything?

Of course, again Arlene's commitment and confidence showed through in that she felt she would do her best whether teachers were grading or not; yet it is important to note that Gary described a gradeless paper as "not worth anything."

At the end of each interview, subjects were asked to try to pull themselves back from the school situation and speculate upon why students seem to become motivated by something like a number or a letter grade.

Geoff - I don't know. It's just something we've been brought up with.
Arlene - In society your grades are your knowledge...
Niki - I think grades mostly measure ability.

Overall, the interviewees seemed to suggest that the grades students receive are an integral part of their daily learning life, an almost natural and definitely unquestioned fact of the way schools operate. They know that the system can be manipulated to a certain extent when they, as Niki said, "poke around a little bit and see what they [teachers] are like." But grades are important especially for the society outside of school. They insure jobs, success, money and maybe even

happiness. Thus it is only natural that students should strive for the "best" in their writing -- a top grade. Geoff and Niki sum up the situation nicely.

> Geoff - You tend to write for that teacher. I change my style...to get better marks.
> Niki - A lot of times when I write I picture the teacher as saying what I'm writing. Like last year in Soc. I could see Mr. D. saying it with his accent and everything in there. And I'd usually do fairly well on the essays.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusions

The wide range of data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews would seem to indicate that, for many students, the evaluation procedures used most commonly, at least at Dunsmuir Secondary School, (grading with a letter or a number on almost every written assignment) have a strong influence upon the way students conceive of the process of writing. For some students, the way they organize, the style they use, the way they think about and "hear" their own writing is all controlled by their own idea of what the teacher wants to see. Evaluation seems to motivate in them a need to find out what the teacher expects and then attempt to fulfil that expectation for the reward of a good or at least a passing grade. The process of writing becomes largely a pragmatic task like any other task in school -- to demonstrate their learning.

At the same time it appeared that many students find evaluation procedures fair and equitable, indeed even

necessary in helping students and teachers work together realistically to stimulate writing progress. Obtaining guidance and specification from the teacher is not necessarily a confining activity. Rather, many students and teachers believe that the only way the whole concept of growth or progress becomes understandable is if it can be seen in relation to some definitive standard or goal set by the teacher. Once one knows where he stands, it becomes easier to see where he has yet to go. And certainly marks, grades and comments seem the most efficacious and comprehensible methods of letting students know where they stand.

But it might be argued that at the same time that evaluation builds windows through which students can easily view progress, it also builds walls within which they become confined in a particular conception of learning. If much of the research and speculation about the nature of composing holds any truth whatsoever, if writing is indeed an act of discovery, of molding one's "inner voice" to fit the demands and forms of language, if, as Vygotsky said, "a word is a microcosm of human consciousness," (1962, p. 153) then the huge danger in the psychological and motivational effects of evaluation is that it pulls the learner's cognitive focus away from himself and aims it at some outside authority figure. "The learner engages with the authority and not with the intrinsic issues." (Moffett, 1968, p. 200) Moffett compares this tendency to the difference "between looking over your shoulder and looking where you are going." (p. 199) The

writer is guided, not by realisitic considerations of meaning, structure and audience, but by specific or assumed stipulations from an extrinsic source.

Furthermore, because students encounter many different teacher expectations over the course of their years in school, they tend to develop a rather jumbled sense of what good writing really is. As Geoff and Niki pointed out, students spend the first part of every year trying to discover what each teacher is "like." Curiously, the criteria section of the study showed that students were often unsuccessful at divining teacher expectations. What resulted was a generally confusing array of definitions and descriptions of what good writing should be. There was really little consistency.

Certainly the process approach to teaching writing would seem not to fit well within such a context. If students are constantly trying to meet the requirements of primarily one particular person as their main audience, then they cannot truly be experiencing writing as the process approach sees it. The goal of communication becomes, not understanding, but an arbitrary and artificial symbol of the "worth" of the language used. Naturally, some of the "stages" and features of composing still occur for students. They do participate in prewriting, writing and certain post-writing activities. Yet when their sights are aimed at one particular target, the "process" must somehow become distorted.

Implications

The findings of this study, admittedly are tentative. Based solely upon the personal perceptions of a small group of teachers and students, their applicability and reliability must be questioned. Yet teachers and researchers alike may find some worth in the sense of awareness that these findings may bring.

Certainly evaluation procedures do exert a powerful influence on some students. As Geoff said, "it's just something we've been brought up with." And writing instructors, "aglow" with the pedagogical promise of the process approach, must be sensitive to the fact that traditional grading practices cannot be changed overnight. Some students, like Arlene, will adapt well; yet others will be disoriented and unmotivated for a long time.

Some researchers have suggested various methods of changing the nature of writing evaluation so that it becomes more compatible with real writing activity. Moffett (1968) recommends that a large part of the evaluation be done by other students who are in fact more realistic audiences. "The role of the teacher then is to teach the students to teach each other." (p. 58) Wagner (1975) suggests that comments only form the core of the evaluation for she feels that self-evaluation is the key to a long-lasting concept of good writing. "It is vital to help students form their own standards and get into the habit of gauging their

productions." (p. 78) Koch et al. (1978) recommend that teachers reverse priorities in grading compositions so that they look at the global concerns of writing first -- unity, focus, coherence -- and gradually work down to the more mechanical errors as the student moves up toward grade 12. There are many suggestions, any of which may make the process approach more viable in the realities of the English classroom.

But in the final analysis, the most important question of all must be asked. Which process is right for which people? There are some for whom writing is not the quintessential learning instrument that English teachers believe. It is an unnatural, arduous task that some young people can never seem to do right. And before educators rush headlong into any one blanket scheme that is going to create "writers" out of all the unmotivated, sometimes uncaring students that enter English classes, some caution should be exercised. Some people simply aren't very interested in expressing themselves in writing. True, it may be a requirement in school and even sometimes in society but that doesn't mean one has to become "involved" in it. It is doubtful for some that they will ever see writing as more than just a distasteful chore. If you take away grades, you run the risk of taking away all motivation because as Gary says, "why do something that's not worth anything?" Admittedly his very pragmatic almost mercenary outlook could perhaps be changed in time but it might just be too that he is the type of person who has no

natural human propensity for self-expression. A basically private individual, Gary may find that the "process" of finding out what the teacher wants and doing the job is the only way he can conceive of writing. For him, that may <u>be</u> the process.

Most students adopt a very realistic attitude toward school. Learning to write is a process that takes time. In order to get better one has to know where one is in moving through the process. The quickest way to do this is to have someone tell you how you are doing compared to others going through the same process. It's a fact of life to them. Simple. They have been locked within a system that they have known since childhood; they know no other way. Teachers become all too painfully aware of this when students constantly ask, "What's this going to be out of?" "What do I have to do?" "What did I get?"

There is no simple answer. The process approach offers some intriguing ideas for teaching writing, ones that may in time prove effective. But the evaluation methods used in many schools offer back some hard realities. The two must somehow be reconciled in further, more wide-reaching research on writing evaluation. Perhaps, one day it will be as one student wrote on his questionnaire,

> If a student works hard on a piece and thinks it is excellent, then it is excellent.

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